

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 IO-11 AID-05 DHA-02 ORM-02 /099 W

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R 081928Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8613

INFO USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 06963

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CB

SUBJECT: FOREIGN DIPLOMATS' OBSERVATIONS OF ALLEGED

U.S. BOMBING OF SIEM REAP

REF: STATE 054860

1. IN COURSE OF CONVERSATIONS WITH QUAI, WE DISCUSSED
"DEMOCRATIC CAMBODIAN" ALLEGATIONS OF US BOMBING OF
SIEM REAP. FRENCH DID NOT IN ANY WAY QUESTION DENIALS
FROM WASHINGTON AND BANGKOK OF US INVOLVEMENT IN THE
ACTION. THEY THOUGHT THE CAMBODIAN ALLEGATIONS FLIMSY,
PARTICULARLY SINCE IT HAD TAKEN THE CAMBODIANS 48 HOURS
TO WORK UP THEIR "EXPLANATION" OF THE INCIDENT. THEY
ALSO THOUGHT IT SIGNIFICANT THAT HANOI IMMEDIATELY DE-
NOUNCED NOT ONLY THE US, BUT ALSO THAILAND WHEREAS THE
PRC WAITED SEVERAL DAYS BEFORE EXCORIATING THE US.

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THE NATURE OF THE PRESS TREATMENT IN ITSELF THEREFORE

CAST STRONG DOUBTS ON THE RELIABILITY OF THE ALLEGATIONS.

2. ALTHOUGH ACCEPTING READILY THE VIEW THAT THE US WOULD FIND NO ADVANTAGE IN SUCH AN ECCENTRIC OPERATION -- QUITE APART FROM THE TECHNICAL ARGUMENTS THAT THE TYPE OF AIRCRAFT THE CAMBODIANS HAD CITED WERE NOT IN OPERATION IN THE THEATRE -- THE FRENCH WERE INTERESTED IN OUR VIEWS AS TO THE CAUSE OF THE DESTRUCTION. PARTICULARLY SINCE THE CAMBODIANS, SLAVISHLY COPYING SIHANOUK, PROMENADED THE RESIDENT DIPLOMATIC CORP TO SIEM REAP, THE FRENCH ASSUMED THAT THERE HAD BEEN DAMAGE IN THE CITY WHICH THEY COULD PASS OFF EVEN TO DIPLOMATS AS US BOMBING. THEY ASKED WHETHER WE HAD AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY OR REFUGEE REPORTS WHICH WOULD EXPLAIN WHAT HAD IN FACT HAPPENED. WE CITED SOME OF THE SPECULATIONS WHICH HAD APPEARED IN THE PRESS, SUCH AS BOMBING FROM THAILAND BY CAMBODIAN DISSIDENTS, EXPLOSION OF AN AMMUNITION DUMP EITHER BY INSURGENT ATTACKS OR ACCIDENT OR COMMUNIST INTERNAL CONFLICT, OR BOMBING BY SOUTH VIETNAM OR LAO-BASED VIETNAMESE AIRCRAFT PERHAPS MASQUERADING AS "US PLANES". THE FRENCH ASKED US TO PROVIDE OUR OFFICIAL VIEWS OF WHAT MIGHT HAVE TAKEN PLACE AS SOON AS WE HAD MORE INFORMATION.

3. WE PRESUME WE DO NOT INTEND TO FLY LOW-LEVEL RECONNAISSANCE OVER SIEM REAP TO ASCERTAIN THE DAMAGE AND ITS PROBABLE CAUSE. PERHAPS HIGHER LEVEL OBLIQUE PHOTOGRAPHY CAN PROVIDE THE INFORMATION. IN ADDITION REFUGEES FROM THE AREA MAY EVENTUALLY REACH THAILAND TO PROVIDE A DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTUAL EVENT. PERHAPS THE SWEDISH DIPLOMAT, IF PRESENTED PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE TYPE OF DAMAGE CAUSED BY A VARIETY OF ORDNANCE, COULD BETTER IDENTIFY THE CAUSE OF THE DAMAGE HE SAW.

4. WE BELIEVE IT IMPORTANT IN DENYING US INVOLVEMENT TO OFFER SOME COGENT EXPLANATION OF WHAT HAD INDEED HAPPENED. THIS WILL BE USEFUL NOT ONLY TO COUNTRIES WHICH DOUBT OUR DENIAL BUT ALSO TO COUNTRIES LIKE FRANCE, WHICH WISH TO ASSIST US IN DISPELLING THE VIEWS

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THAT US POLICY REMAINS HOSTILE TO THE NEW REGIMES IN THE AREA AND HENCE COULD INSTIGATE SUCH "AGGRESSIVE" ACTS. IT SEEMS, WITH THE CHINESE REPLAY OF THE INCIDENT, THAT COMMUNIST ACCUSATIONS OF US HOSTILITY MAY CONTINUE WITH WORLD-WIDE DISSEMINATION ASSURED BY CAMBODIA'S FRIENDS.

5. FOR THEIR PART, THE FRENCH SAID THEY WOULD PROVIDE

ANY INFORMATION ON THE ACTUAL EVENT WHICH THEY PICK UP
IN PEKING OR VIETNAM OR FROM REFUGEES.
RUSH

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